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BIG NATO SPY RING REPORTED BROKEN

Size of Group Put at 300
by Suspect Held in Italy

By The Associated Press

ROME, March 22—An Italian accused as a spy was reported to have told investigators today that 300 persons connected with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization were involved in an espionage ring that helped the Communists.

The Italian, Giorgio Rinaldi, a parachutist, and his wife, Angela Maria, were questioned for more than three hours in Turin by Deputy State Attorney Guido Netti-Modona. After the couple and their chauffeur, Armando Girard, had been formally charged with spying for the Soviet Union.

After the charges had been filed, a Soviet diplomat reported to have been involved in the case abruptly left Rome by plane for Moscow.

They were unconfirmed reports that the Italian Government had ordered the diplomat, Yuri Pavlenko, to leave the country.

An informant who had been present at the questioning of the Rinaldis said the parachutist had described efforts "to set up spying cells" at every NATO base in Europe.

The informant, who asked that his name not be used, also said it was understood that civilian agents and military personnel had been arrested by de-

Continued on Page 18, Column 4

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Continued From Page 1, Col. 1

fense authorities in Greece, Spain, Switzerland and Cyprus.

The report on Mr. Rinaldi's questioning was not confirmed. Mr. Netti Modona said, "Nobody concerned with the investigation is authorized to say anything at this stage."

In Rome, a Defense Ministry spokesman said the ministry had no information on the informant's description of Mr. Rinaldi's admission.

The alleged spy ring was thought to be concentrated in Southern Europe and the Mediterranean and to be at an early stage of development, the informant said.

Mr. Rinaldi was reported to have described the personnel involved in the ring as military men and civilians of various nationalities, including American.

Radio Equipment Found

The informant said Mr. Rinaldi had provided a list of cover names for several NATO officers who, he said, had been in contact with him or other agents. He also produced "a number of real names," the informant added.

The police said they had found communications codes and a powerful radio receiver in the Rinaldi home and in a shop the Rinaldis operated.

Sources in the Italian counter-espionage agency said Mr. Pavlenko, an attaché at the Soviet Embassy in Rome, was caught Monday picking up papers and microfilms at a letter drop in the countryside near Rome.

They said the diplomat had tried to flee, but was overtaken by the police.

Mr. Pavlenko, his wife, Natalia, and their 6-year-old son, Anatoli, left aboard a Czech airliner for Prague en route to Moscow.

A Foreign Ministry spokesman said official communiqués on expulsion cases are not issued until 48 hours after a diplomat has been ordered to leave the country.



Associated Press

Giorgio Rinaldi, an Italian parachutist and stunt man.



United Press International

Yuri Pavlenko, attaché at Soviet Embassy in Rome.